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ABSTRACT

A study examined innovative workplace practices in companies that employ significant numbers of entry-level workers. Findings were based on a series of personal interviews with human resource directors in 58 companies in the Northwest and the Pacific. Asked about the quality of current entry-level workers, employers reported that a disturbing number of these workers lack adequate reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills. Other areas of concern included critical thinking and problem-solving skills, ability to work in groups and on teams, employee motivation, attitude, and flexibility. Activities undertaken by employers to support entry-level workers and help them improve their performance as needed were identified. Promising practices used by responding businesses were reported in 10 areas: employee involvement; child care; family and community concerns; recruiting; training; supervision; motivation; the new basics; business/education partnerships; and handicapped and special needs employees. Implications of the study's findings for consideration by those responsible for providing education and training were also identified. Ten areas were cited: new skills, peer influence, common purpose, expanded learning opportunities, involvement, accountability, cross-training, special training, career paths, and business partnerships. (Appendixes include 16 references, a list of interviewees, interview questions, and summary of responses.) (YLB)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED313500

Entry-Level Worker Study:

Phase 1 Report

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ABSTRACT

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) in Portland, and the Northwest Policy Center (NPC) in Seattle, jointly conducted a review of the literature on entry-level workers and a series of personal interviews with human resource directors in various companies in the Northwest and the Pacific. Fifty-eight companies were contacted representing small, medium, and large firms in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

From these investigations, a picture emerges of the state of entry-level employment in these areas. Asked about the quality of current entry-level workers, employers reported that a disturbing number of these workers lack adequate reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills. Other areas of concern included critical thinking and problem-solving skills, ability to work in groups and on teams, employee motivation, attitude, and flexibility.

Researchers inquired into the activities undertaken by employers to support entry-level workers and help them improve their performance as needed. Promising practices used by responding businesses are reported in ten areas: 1) employee involvement, 2) child care, 3) family and community concerns, 4) recruiting, 5) training, 6) supervision, 7) motivation, 8) the new basics (i.e., skills beyond what used to be regarded as "the basic skills"), 9) business/education partnerships, and 10) handicapped and special needs employees.

Finally, NWREL and NPC staff identified the implications of the study's findings for consideration by those responsible for providing education and training. Ten areas were cited: 1) new skills, 2) peer influence, 3) common purpose, 4) expanded learning opportunities, 5) involvement, 6) accountability, 7) cross-training, 8) special training, 9) career paths, and 10) business partnerships.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As stated in Building a Better Workforce, "Our nation's economic strength and vitality, our productivity and international competitiveness, depend on our capacity to build and maintain a quality workforce." As the available pool of entry-level workers decreases, businesses are beginning to hire employees who, less than five years ago, may not have even been considered for a job interview. Although some employers are quick to criticize our educational system for failing to turn out graduates who are proficient in basic skills, have good work values and habits, and are adaptable and eager to learn, many realize that they, too, have an increasing role in the continued development of new employees. Some employers in the Northwest are expressing a need to learn about exemplary practices of other companies in working effectively with what might be considered "at-risk" employees. These employees may include undereducated and poorly motivated youth, low-income minority workers, limited English-speaking immigrants, women with young children or responsibility for elderly dependents, dislocated workers, and older workers returning to the workplace. There is also a need for educators to look at exemplary business practices for entry-level workers to see if some of these practices could be adapted for use with at-risk youth.

Our rapidly changing economy, new demands on the workforce, and changing demographics have led to a shortage of work-ready, entry-level workers. Significant numbers of people are entering the workforce with less than a high school education including youth, dislocated workers, and welfare recipients. Educators, employers, and economists have recognized the need for new thinking in preparing our workforce. Employers have taken on roles previously reserved for the education and social welfare sectors and are providing education, training, and social protections to workers in an effort to attract, train, and retain workers. This policy study examines innovative workplace practices in companies that employ significant numbers of entry-level workers. It is based on employer descriptions of company practices and benefits. Findings and analyses are targeted to educators and education policy makers; to public policy makers in economic development and social welfare; and to the private sector.

This study was conducted jointly by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and the Northwest Policy Center (NPC). NWREL is a private, nonprofit organization working to serve educational practitioners and policy makers in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and the Pacific. The NPC is a regional program, based at the University of Washington, whose mission is to inform and improve public policy strategies which promote economic vitality in the Northwest. Both agencies have an interest in the changing workforce and workplace policy.

This study was based on a review of the literature and on personal interviews and observations at a number of companies in the Northwest. Data were collected in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. A total of 58 companies were contacted representing small, medium, and large firms or organizations. These companies represent construction, manufacturing, retail trade, health, public utilities, child care, financial and insurance industries, local, state, and federal government, food and hospitality industries, other service industries, and higher education.

In each community to be studied, preliminary contacts were made to obtain recommendations regarding companies that: 1) hire a number of low-income youth and adults through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or other sources; 2) have a reputation for effective affirmative action practices; or 3) are considered companies with effective employment practices for entry-level workers. Of particular interest were companies that might be using effective techniques to attract, train, and retain entry-level employees. After selecting a set of companies and contact persons for study, telephone calls were made to explain the purposes for the study, answer questions, and schedule an interview date and time. In most cases, it was the personnel or human resources director who was interviewed.

Employers reported experiencing shortages in numbers of qualified applicants for entry-level positions. The growing gap in the level of basic skills needed by employers and those available in the applicant pool is of great concern to the business community.

Employers mentioned serious deficiencies in reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills. Other areas of concern included critical thinking and problem solving skills, ability to work in teams or as a group, motivation and attitude, and flexibility.

Promising practices used by businesses in the Northwest, Hawaii, and Guam are described in 10 areas: employee involvement, child care, family and community concerns, recruiting, training, supervision, motivation, the new basics, business-education partnerships, and handicapped and special needs employees.

For too long, education, training, and workplace practices were regarded as someone else's problem: basic skills and training were the schools' problem; children were their parents' problem; workplace policies were business' or labor's problem. Now, society can no longer regard education, social welfare, and economic development problems as separate. Instead, society's ability to have an educated workforce, to protect children from poverty, to raise our quality of life and standard of living, and to increase productivity, rely in part on a recognition that social, educational, and economic gains are integrated. The attention paid to public education, to youth at risk, and to children in poverty affect the quality

of America's future workforce and its ability to compete in the world marketplace. Policy makers have begun to acknowledge how interrelated their goals are: that investing in education and training is an economic development strategy as critical as job creation or retention strategies; that the new welfare programs designed to move clients successfully into the world of work depend on a workplace that accommodates the needs of families; that those preparing youth and adults for the world of work need to stay attuned to the changing needs of employers.

Worker preparation and work and family policies comprise a bridge between social welfare and economic development goals. These policies are of particular significance for workers whose attachment to the workforce is marginal and are at risk of failing to succeed in the workplace. These include workers who drop in and out of employment due to lack of work skills, limited educational background, limited English proficiency, learning or physical handicaps, or because of conflict with family responsibilities. Many of these workers in what we have defined as entry-level positions--i.e., those not requiring a high school education or vocational training--find that workplace policies and practices are the key to their success in remaining employed, in developing their skills and marketability, and in successfully managing work and family responsibilities.

What role does public policy play in offering these programs and benefits? Innovative practices are mandated in some states, such as Oregon's parental leave law; some are offered because of an incentive program, such as on-site or release time English as a Second Language or GED classes sponsored by Employment Service training grants. Many workplace practices are left up to the marketplace. An important task for public policy makers is to determine the appropriate mix of government mandate, public incentives, and private sector initiatives.

The findings of this study, with its special focus on entry-level workers, have policy implications for education, business, economic development and social welfare. They add new insights to a continuing discussion of the implications of our transforming economy, and in particular to the changing workforce and the changing workplace.

Changing Workforce

The changing characteristics of our worker force have been well documented in recent reports such as Workforce 2000. Our workforce is aging and will include proportionately more limited English speakers, more workers with young and elderly dependents, and more educationally disadvantaged. The increase in the number of working women with young dependents has been dramatic. Estimates show that one of every four workers is dealing with child care problems. At the same time, the fastest growing cohort of the population is aged 58 and older. Many analysts feel that elder care issues will soon be of great concern for

many workers. Many companies are actively recruiting older workers as a source of personnel, especially temporary agencies and fast food chains.

Changing Workplace

The workplace is undergoing a period of rapid change. Both the types of jobs and the entry-level skills required are fundamentally different than they were just a few years ago.

Our country's expectation of what happens in the workplace has evolved. We now rely on the workplace for many social benefits and protections which are offered through government mandate in other countries. We rely on our employers for health care for ourselves and our dependents, security in our old age through pensions, paid vacation, and sick leave. Now, as employers are feeling the effect of their employees juggling work and family responsibilities and find they need a better prepared workforce, many are beginning to respond with assistance for child care and elder care, with teaching basic skills such as reading and writing to workers, and with developing teamwork and problem solving skills. Many of these programs are seen by employers as particularly important in attracting and retaining entry-level workers, who are a decreasing population due to demographic changes. How can small businesses provide these policies and programs and remain competitive?

Promising Practices

One of the primary purposes for this study of entry-level workers was to identify promising business practices affecting these employees. In considering promising practices, efforts were made to identify exemplary policies or procedures not already in common use that would be beneficial both to the individual worker and to the company. After discussing the findings, nine areas for promising practices were identified that other businesses may want to consider. These areas are: a) employee involvement, b) child care, c) family and community concerns, d) recruiting, e) training, f) supervision, g) motivation, h) business-education partnerships, and i) handicapped and special needs employees. Shown here is a sample of these promising practices.

a. Employee Involvement

- Employers at several companies interviewed found it important to involve employees in many aspects of the business. Employees who contributed suggestions that were adopted were rewarded with up to $10,000 in bonus money. Before determining employee benefits packages, several employers had conducted employee surveys to determine which benefits were most valued by the employees. Although employ-

ees often have a choice in selecting from a menu of health care programs, none of the companies we interviewed had a flexible benefits package that would allow each employee to choose which benefits he/she wanted. Several companies indicated they were currently considering such a cafeteria plan, but had not yet adopted one.

- Many companies recognize the benefits in allowing workers decision making opportunities in areas that affect their worklife. These companies feel that morale and loyalty are enhanced when employees have more control over their worklife and decisions that affect them.

- One major employer in Seattle was interested in setting up a child care assistance program, but instead of making it a management decision, chose to set up an employee committee to investigate the need and options. This committee chose to spend countless hours in their work, and eventually made a series of recommendations including establishment of on-site child care, and subsidized sick child care in a local hospital. As a result of the committee's work and the value management put on their recommendations, a wide range of programs was implemented. This company has six other employee committees that address issues of concern or interest to its workers.

- Another employer in the electronics industry feels that there is a "prestige" factor in working there. The company has tried to build on that in many ways. One of its techniques is to give everyone important-sounding titles; for example, entry-level workers who deliver mail are all called "couriers." This company fosters a team spirit and what it refers to as an "atmosphere of energy," with numerous social activities that appeal to its relatively young workforce—parties, company celebrations, sports activities, and discounts on products.

b. Child Care

Dependent care issues—for young and elderly dependents—have become particularly important in the last several years with the rapid increase in dual earner families and single heads of household. Increased longevity indicates that elder care issues may be one of the most important growth areas for company benefits. This particular study, with its focus on entry-level workers, found more examples of workplace practices affecting care of young dependents. Offering child care assistance is a complicated issue. A family's choice of child care arrangements is very personal: Some prefer the peace of mind of onsite child care, offering opportunities to check in or spend break time with a child or to be immediately available in emergencies; others prefer to have children close to home. Some look

for a center with a variety of activities and socialization opportunities; others feel a homelike environment is more appropriate.

One employer offered a range of types of assistance, encouraging employees to make their own choices in finding the appropriate setting for their child. This company offers a dependent care account that allows employees to use pretax dollars for the child, elder, or spousal care of their choice. These options are:

- An onsite child care center providing a certain number of guaranteed slots and discounted rates to staff
- An arrangement with a local hospital for sick child care, which is subsidized 50 percent by the employer
- Child care referral through the employee assistance program
- Summer day care referral

The company also offers brown bag lunches on parenting topics such as peer pressure. And finally, it demonstrates its concern for children in the community by providing financial assistance to a consortium that supports latchkey programs, and by soliciting other companies to do the same.

c. Family and Community Concerns

- One company with a strong commitment to affirmative action has an active women's caucus addressing spouse abuse, divorce laws, and child support laws. A growing number of companies are involved with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Such EAPs provide referral for a variety of personal or family problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse. Some provide classes and other help in interpersonal skills, such as managing anger.
- Employers have many options to demonstrate recognition and support for the responsibilities employees have outside work. Some offer opportunities for employees to control their work and family time such as part-time work, flexible work hours, and job sharing.

  Others provide leadership in demonstrating their responsibility to the community. One employer rewards outstanding employees by allowing release time for volunteer work in the agency of their choice.

d. Recruiting

- Several companies that do a great deal of hiring mentioned having a 24-hour phone line where applicants can get the latest information on openings.

- An Oregon company is now doing drug testing for everybody and is getting better employees because the word is out. A company that has several openings for apprentices each year examines the applicant's transcripts, records from school work, work experience, and content of courses taken. Hiring college students is popular with some companies. One offers a $250 college scholarship through a name drawing of employees.

- Several employers mentioned recruiting through minority organizations such as the Urban League or refugee forum. Special benefits such as providing bus passes or free parking are sometimes offered to attract employees.

- A fast food company has found it useful to recruit and hire relatives of its refugee employees. The employee with the best command of English is then responsible for training and supervising his or her relatives.

- Companies interviewed reported they pay employees a bonus for recommending their friends who actually get hired by the company. If the newly hired employee is successful for the first three months, the friend who recommended that person gets a second bonus. This causes a strong motivation for the original employee to be selective in whom he or she recommends and also to provide buddy help and advice to the newly hired friend.

e. Training

- Many companies are now offering tuition reimbursement programs in addition to in-house training programs and the more common on-the-job training. Educational support is generally funded at a 100 percent level if required for the job and at 50 or 75 percent if not required but considered to enhance the job performance. Several companies allow employees to take almost any course and be reimbursed.

- For those employees who do not speak English as a native language, many companies are providing either onsite or off-site language instruction. One company donated one hour of paid time and asked the

employee to donate one hour of free time. The classes were scheduled between major work shifts, usually in the evening as the workers were coming off their shift.

- An Idaho company has hired two teachers to develop an employment development course. Employees learn how to get along with others and about career ladders.

- A company in the retail field issues each employee a training passport which contains the employee's photo and a record of all his or her training and promotions. This passport is reviewed every year as part of the employee's performance review. Results of the review determine the employee's pay scale.

- Some companies are finding it necessary to provide remedial training in basic skills such as writing, mathematics, and communications. Generally these classes are worded as worker upgrading to avoid the negative connotation of remediation.

- Classes on customer relations are sometimes taught using role playing. Employees are asked to bring in actual case samples which get reviewed.

- When problems are found that are group based, one Idaho company brings in outside staff who do team exercises with the whole group to resolve the problems.

- One company was impressed by the success of its "Executive Leadership Institute" in fostering team building skills, and is piloting a two to three-week miniversion for secretaries and clerical workers.

f. Supervision

- Supervision varied widely across the companies we interviewed. In some cases the supervision was considered minimal. In other cases the supervision was close, especially for the first six months when some companies moved people into permanent positions. Line supervisors often had the responsibility to delegate, oversee, do on-the-job training, monitor performance, evaluate, provide feedback, and check on the balance of work performed. In some companies, line supervisors also were responsible for hiring new employees in their unit.

- Supervisors sometimes assign a new employee to a buddy from whom to learn. Other companies assign new employees to the lead on a team.

- In some companies, team operations have become common, with more team numbers responsible for training and supervising others.

- One site used a Creative/People Management class of 16 hours to train supervisors. An external class uses a computerized tool called the Social Style Profile to delineate an individual's style of interpersonal interaction as seen by others. It also measures versatility in being able to interact with different social styles. The employees' department pays for the course.

g. Motivation

- Getting employees to show up for work regularly and on time is a major problem for many employers. One company in Oregon has an attendance lottery every month. It found that about half of the eligible employees were Laotians.

- Some companies have profit sharing; so it is to each employee's advantage to give his or her full effort.

- Shares of stock are offered as incentives to employees in some companies.

- Recognition as the outstanding employee of the month is popular in certain companies. Pay bonuses, posting of photos of such people, special parking spots, promotions, and free trips are sometimes offered as rewards. Rewards are given for good attendance, outstanding team membership, and customer service.

- Workers in a company in Guam are anxious for cross-training, because they can get the salary level of the person they substitute for during the period for which they fill in.

h. Business-Education Partnerships

- Although the focus of this study was on entry-level workers rather than on partnerships, several employers described various ways they were assisting the local schools. For example, one company encourages employees to volunteer as tutors of at-risk students. In addition to helping the children involved, the employer told us it was perceived as a good alternative for teaching employees how to improve listening skills and getting along with people from different backgrounds.

- An example of a partnership involving the state, education, and a private company to provide entry-level workers with skills was found in Washington. This program locates disadvantaged, unemployed workers through Target, a subcontractor to the Employment Security Department. The participants are eligible to participate at no cost in a 12-week course at the Lake Washington Vocational Technical Institute, which includes coursework in pre-employment skills, basic skill training, and manufacturing skills. The course entitled, "Manufacturing Process Technology," is developed in conjunction with the company and includes transferable and company-specific occupational skills. The manufacturer we interviewed was participating in the pilot project and had agreed to hire all 40 graduates of the first class.

- One company cited summer internships in its bank for high school business education teachers. The internships were designed to bring teachers into the business environment to learn hands-on techniques in banking that can be passed on to students in the classroom.

i. Handicapped/Special Needs Populations

- The special needs groups mentioned most frequently by the employers we interviewed were refugees and others with limited English proficiency. They are often paired up with buddies who know more English. In many cases, the work attitude of these employees was considered excellent. Several employers mentioned having ESL instructors teach English classes for several months. They are provided at no cost to employees. A Hawaii company hired a deaf man who had trouble communicating with co-workers. Now he does it by writing. Other employees have enjoyed learning sign language to use with him.
- An employee with a learning disability had trouble working with others, so the company set up a job where he works by himself and he is doing fine. Another learning disabled person had a problem when told to do three things. The personnel manager talked with his supervisors and they arranged for him to do only one task at a time.

The report also identified the implications of the study's findings for consideration by those responsible for providing education and training. Ten areas were cited: 1) new skills, 2) peer influence, 3) common purpose, 4) expanded learning opportunities, 5) involvement, 6) accountability, 7) cross-training, 8) special training, 9) career paths, and 10) business partnerships.

A copy of the complete report can be ordered from the NWREL Marketing Department, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204, for $9.85 including shipping and handling.

INTRODUCTION

> *"We are in the midst of one of the most extended periods of employment growth in our history. American businesses have created nearly 16 million jobs since 1982. This represents two and a half times as many new jobs as the other six major industrialized nations combined. The decisive factor in this extraordinary record of economic recovery and employment expansion has been the quality of the American workforce. Since the 1920s, the large majority of the nation's productivity improvements have been directly linked to improvements in the quality of our labor force. The quality of our future workers—their skills, education, adaptability, and self-esteem—will, in large part, determine whether we can maintain that momentum in the years ahead." Preface to Building a Quality Workforce*

This report describes: 1) the background to the study, 2) needs, 3) purposes for the study, 4) collaborative process used, 5) methodology, 6) characteristics of entry-level workers, 7) promising practices found, 8) key policy issues, 9) policy questions, 10) implications for education, 11) reporting and disseminating, 12) potential for continued research, and 13) references. In addition, three appendices are provided. Appendix A contains the names of individuals and companies interviewed, B is the set of interview questions, and C is a summary of interview responses.

1. BACKGROUND

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) Regional Policy Center for Education and Employment was established with funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, to address priority policy issues in the Northwest. Over the past five years, NWREL has been involved in projects that assist young people in transitions from high school to work and/or postsecondary education. We have developed guidelines related to articulation of curricula between high school and community colleges, curricula to help prepare youth for further education and employment, and have worked with special needs populations who need extra support in this transition process. In each of these cases, we have included a focus on the role that business and industry can play. NWREL is now extending its transition work to study policies and practices used by the private sector to help new employees succeed and advance on the job. We are particularly concerned about at-risk youth who leave school and obtain their

first full-time job, dislocated workers, and older workers who are seeking re-employment.

2. NEEDS

As stated in Building a Better Workforce, "Our nations' economic strength and vitality, our productivity and international competitiveness, depend on our capacity to build and maintain a quality workforce." As the available pool of entry-level workers decreases, businesses are beginning to have to hire employees who, less than five years ago, they may not have even considered for a job interview. Although some employers are quick to criticize our educational system for failing to turn out graduates who are proficient in basic skills, have good work values and habits, and are adaptable and eager to learn, many realize that they too have an increasing role in the continued development of new employees. Some employers in the Northwest are expressing a need to learn about exemplary practices of other companies in working effectively with what might be considered "at-risk" employees. These employees may include undereducated and poorly motivated youth, low income minority workers, limited English-speaking immigrants, women with young children or responsibility for elderly dependents, dislocated workers, and older workers returning to the workplace. There is also a need for educators to look at exemplary business practices for entry-level workers to see if some of these practices could be adapted for use with at-risk youth.

In the Workforce 2000 study done by the Hudson Institute for the U.S. Department of Labor, interesting labor force projections are presented. In combination, the demographic changes will mean that the new workers entering the workforce between now and the year 2000 will be much different from those who people it today. Listed below are quotes regarding a few of these trends:

- The workforce will grow slowly, becoming older, more female, and more disadvantaged.

- The new jobs in service industries will demand much higher skill levels than the jobs of today.

- As the average age of American workers climbs toward 40, the nation must ensure that its workforce and its institutions do not lose their adaptability and willingness to learn.

- The shrinking numbers of young people, the rapid pace of industrial change, and the ever-rising skill requirements of the emerging econ-

omy make the task of fully utilizing minority workers particularly urgent between now and 2000. They will be a larger share of new entrants into the labor force.

- Almost two-thirds of the new entrants into the workforce between now and the year 2000 will be women.

- Immigrants will represent the largest share of the increase in the population and the workforce since the first World War. This is especially true in the South and West.

The need for a better prepared workforce is also recognized by educational policy makers. In its recent three-year plan (Policy and Priorities Committee, 1988), the Education Commission of the States notes: "New jobs and new kinds of work demand more sophisticated laborers. Service workers have to be better communicators, better problem-solvers. Industry workers faced with more dynamic, complex environments, are asked to think more, team up more, make critical judgments. Workers in every sector are increasingly asked to gather information, synthesize it, analyze it, interpret and evaluate it, and then communicate it to the right people at the right time in the right form."

3. PURPOSES

Our rapidly changing economy, new demands on the workforce, and changing demographics have led to a shortage of work-ready, entry-level workers. Significant numbers of people are entering the workforce with less than a high school education including: youth, dislocated workers, and welfare recipients. Educators, employers, and economists have recognized the need for new thinking in preparing our workforce. Employers have taken on roles previously reserved for the education and social welfare sectors and are providing education, training, and social protections to workers in an effort to attract, train, and retain workers. This policy study examines innovative workplace practices in companies that employ significant numbers of entry-level workers. It is based on employer descriptions of company practices and benefits. Findings and analyses are targeted to educators and education policy makers; public policy makers in economic development and social welfare; and to the private sector.

<u>Findings should be of special interest to:</u>

Educators who are preparing young people for productive lives as adults and workers, are responsible for imparting knowledge that youth need for the two greatest responsibilities most will ever have: work and family. They should be particularly interested in employers' responses to: desired characteristics

and observed deficiencies in entry-level employees as feedback on effectiveness of current training; information on effective workplace strategies for motivating and training workers as a source of valuable lessons and new ideas for educators; and workplace changes that allow employees to successfully balance work and family responsibilities.

Education policy makers involved in the reform of secondary education should be particularly interested in employer responses relating to the perceived relevance of high school vocational education and to characteristics and deficiencies of entry-level workers. Findings will also be of interest to those who coordinate worker preparation and vocational training, such as state school superintendents and state vocational education coordinating boards.

Personnel directors and CEOs concerned with attracting, training, and retaining employees will be interested in learning how other businesses' personnel policies reflect a new concern for work and family benefits and for upgrading skills. Public policy makers are concerned with formulating policies relating to social welfare, economic development, health, and family and child welfare. The sections on child care and worker benefits will be particularly useful to them.

4. THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

This study was cosponsored by the Northwest Policy Center (NPC), a model regional program based at the University of Washington whose mission is to inform and improve public strategies which promote economic vitality in the Northwest. NPC defines its mission as follows:

The Northwest Policy Center informs and invigorates the efforts of those who shape public policy in the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska. NPC is an implementation-oriented policy center which conducts policy research, designs and evaluates policy alternatives, and promotes continuous exchange of information among the region's elected officials and other decision makers. The Center fosters cooperative strategies for economic vitality among the states and promotes the utilization of best practices by those seeking to improve the region's economic future.

NPC has targeted "changing workforce and workplace policy" as one of its key program concentrations in its mission to ensure economic vitality for the states of the Northwest. The success of NPC activities and its high visibility with policy makers in education, economic development, and social welfare make it a valuable partner in conducting this study, particularly in the areas of planning, analyzing policy implications, and disseminating findings.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on a review of the literature and on personal interviews and observations at a number of companies in the Northwest. Data were collected in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. A total of 58 companies were contacted representing small, medium, and large firms or organizations. These companies represent construction, manufacturing, retail trade, health, public utilities, government, food and hospitality industries, other service industries, and higher education. A list of persons and companies interviewed is contained in Appendix A.

In each community to be studied, preliminary contacts were made to obtain recommendations regarding companies that: 1) hire a number of low income youth and adults through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or other sources; 2) have a reputation for effective affirmative action practices; or 3) are considered companies with effective employment practices for entry-level workers. Of particular interest were companies that might be using effective techniques to attract, train, and retain entry-level employees. After selecting a set of companies and contact persons for study, telephone calls were made to explain the purposes for the study, answer questions, and schedule an interview date and time. In most cases, it was the personnel or human resources director who was interviewed.

In the case of Seattle, Washington, NWREL contracted with Carolyn Cohen, a consultant with the Northwest Policy Center at the University of Washington, to assist in survey design, interviewing, analysis, and write-up of findings. The Northwest Policy Center has agreed to be a partner in this study, and will assist in organizing meetings with policy makers to discuss the results.

Prior to conducting the personal interviews at employer sites, preliminary data were gathered by telephone and other sources. These included the company name, address, telephone number, type of business, name and position of person to be interviewed, and referral source. In addition to some demographic questions dealing with the company size, number of entry-level employees, etc., the interview itself covered: procedures for recruiting entry-level employees, types of entry-level positions available, whether there was a preference for applicants with high school vocational education, changes in characteristics of entry-level employees, characteristics desired in applicants, common problems of entry-level employees, categories of employees having difficulties and what help was provided them by the company, reasons for entry-level employees leaving or being fired, ways of rewarding excellent employees, supervision provided, training of supervisors, ways companies develop or reinforce desired employability skills, benefits offered, family-related benefits, training provided, ways that schools can better prepare people for

entry-level employment, and recommendations of other companies that should be interviewed for exemplary practices. A copy of the actual interview questions is contained in Appendix B, and a summary of responses is shown in Appendix C.

Information from questions related to desired characteristics of entry-level employees and deficiencies noted have been compared with findings from other national studies. These comparisons are discussed in the findings section.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTRY-LEVEL WORKERS

Demographic projections for the year 2000, which identify more women and minorities entering the workforce and increasing numbers of new immigrants, are already reflected in the current workforce at the entry level. Some of the special needs of these groups present challenges to productivity in the workforce. It is critical that these needs be recognized and addressed by schools and employers to better prepare entry-level workers.

Many employers we interviewed reported hiring new immigrants. However, language barriers often made communication difficult. Some new immigrants improve their communication skills. One company indicated that it wanted its employees to have an opportunity to move upward within the organization, but new immigrant workers were hampered by language barriers.

As more women enter the workforce, child care is a growing concern. Some employers mentioned that absenteeism and tardiness were often problems associated with lack of available child care. Employers recognize the need for child care, but few companies are actually providing it. Several mentioned that they were discussing the issue at the administrative level. Most were noncommittal about possibilities for providing assistance with child are.

These demographics indicate a growing imbalance in terms of increased concentrations of minority and disadvantaged populations in lower paying fields. Such a continued trend will reinforce a growing underclass of unmotivated and disenfranchised populations. The growing trend toward higher educational requirements, and an increase in numbers of minorities and other disadvantaged groups who lack adequate education and training, can lead to a crisis for these groups in the country in terms of lost human potential, equal access to higher wage occupations, and lack of work and class mobility.

When the special needs of educationally and economically disadvantaged minority populations are not met, the long-term costs to society in terms of loss of an effective labor pool are catastrophic.

Employers reported experiencing shortages in numbers of qualified applicants for entry-level positions. The growing gap in the level of basic skills needed by employers and those available in the applicant pool is of great concern to the business community.

Employers mentioned serious deficiencies in reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills. Other areas of concern included critical thinking and problem solving skills, ability to work in teams or as a group, motivation and attitude, and flexibility.

One of the major changing characteristics identified by employers fell within the category of attitude and motivation. They felt employees lacked an appropriate work ethic that motivates workers to take responsibility for their work products. Employers felt employees often didn't understand the expectations of the workplace. Schools are often identified as the responsible agents for communicating these critical needs to students. Much can be done to improve motivation and attitude of students which in turn will have an impact on preparation for the workforce.

Entry-level workers did not have strong employability skills (i.e., presentation for interviews, filling out applications, ability to communicate effectively their strengths, ability to get along easily with co-workers and supervisors). They lack knowledge and understanding of good work habits and skills. There is ample evidence that educational programs must increase career education and stress opportunities for students to experience firsthand a workplace environment.

Promising Practices

One of the primary purposes for this study of entry-level workers was to identify promising business practices affecting these employees. In considering promising practices we were looking for exemplary policies or procedures, not already in common use, that would be beneficial both to the individual worker as well as to the company. After discussing the findings, the authors of this report identified nine areas for promising practices that other businesses may want to consider. These areas are: 1) employee involvement, 2) child care, 3) family and community concerns, 4) recruiting, 5) training, 6) supervision, 7) motivation, 8) business-education partnerships, and 9) handicapped and special needs employees.

a. Involvement

- Employers at several companies interviewed found it important to involve employees in many aspects of the business. Employees who contributed suggestions that were adopted were rewarded with up to

$10,000 in bonus money. Before determining employee benefits packages, several employers had conducted employee surveys to determine which benefits were most valued by the employees. Although employees often have a choice in selecting from a menu of health care programs, none of the companies we interviewed had a flexible benefits package that would allow employees to choose which benefits they each wanted. Several companies indicated they were currently considering such a cafeteria plan but had not yet adopted one.

- Many companies recognize the benefits in allowing workers decision making opportunities in areas that affect their worklife. These companies feel that morale and loyalty are enhanced when employees have more control over their worklife and decisions that affect them.

- One major employer in Seattle was interested in setting up a child care assistance program, but instead of making it a management decision, chose to set up an employee committee to investigate the need and options. This committee chose to spend countless hours in their work, and eventually made a series of recommendations including establishment of on-site child care, and subsidized sick child care in a local hospital. As a result of the committee's work and the value management put on their recommendations, a wide range of programs was implemented. This company has six other employee committees that address issues of concern or interest to its workers.

- Another employer in the electronics industry feels that there is a "prestige" factor in working there. The company has tried to build on that in many ways. One of its techniques is to give everyone important-sounding titles; for example, entry-level workers who deliver mail are all called "couriers." This company fosters a team spirit and what it refers to as an "atmosphere of energy," with numerous social activities that appeal to its relatively young workforce—parties, company celebrations, sports activities, and discounts on products.

b. Child Care

Dependent care issues—for young and elderly dependents—have become particularly important in the last several years with the rapid increase in dual earner families and single heads of household. Increased longevity indicates that elder care issues may be one of the most important growth areas for company benefits. This particular study, with its focus on entry-level workers, found more examples of workplace practices affecting care of young dependents. Offering child care assistance is a complicated issue. A family's choice of child care arrangements is very personal: Some prefer the peace of mind of onsite child care, offering opportunities to

check in or spend break time with a child or to be immediately available in emergencies; others prefer to have children close to home. Some look for a center with a variety of activities and socialization opportunities; others feel a homelike environment is more appropriate.

One employer offered a range of types of assistance, encouraging employees to make their own choices in finding the appropriate setting for their child. This company offers a dependent care account that allows employees to use pretax dollars for the child, elder, or spousal care of their choice. These options are:

- An onsite child care center providing a certain number of guaranteed slots and discounted rates to staff
- An arrangement with a local hospital for sick child care, which is subsidized 50 percent by the employer
- Child care referral through the employee assistance program
- Summer day care referral

The company also offers brown bag lunches on parenting topics such as peer pressure. And finally, it demonstrates its concern for children in the community by providing financial assistance to a consortium that supports latchkey programs, and by soliciting other companies to do the same.

c. Family and Community Concerns

- One company with a strong commitment to affirmative action has an active women's caucus addressing spouse abuse, divorce laws, and child support laws. A growing number of companies are involved with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Such EAPs provide referral for a variety of personal or family problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse. Some provide classes and other help in interpersonal skills, such as managing anger.
- Employers have many options to demonstrate recognition and support for the responsibilities employees have outside work. Some offer opportunities for employees to control their work and family time such as part-time work, flexible work hours, and job sharing. Others provide leadership in demonstrating their responsibility to the community. One employer rewards outstanding employees by allowing release time for volunteer work in the agency of their choice.

d. Recruiting

- Staff at one company work with the Older Persons Action Group to help them fill out job applications and to provide training in reemployment skills.

- A human resources specialist in a large federal agency is active in school and community resources programs. She volunteers with the schools to do mock student employment interviews and keeps an eye open for promising candidates for her agency for hire.

- Several companies that do a great deal of hiring mentioned having a 24-hour phone line where applicants can get the latest information on openings.

- An Oregon company is now doing drug testing for everybody and is getting better employees because the word is out. A company that has several openings for apprentices each year examines the applicant's transcripts, records from school work, work experience, and content of courses taken. Hiring college students is popular with some companies. One offers a $250 college scholarship through a name drawing of employees.

- Several employers mentioned recruiting through minority organizations such as the Urban League or refugee forum. Special benefits such as providing bus passes or free parking are sometimes offered to attract employees.

- A fast food company has found it useful to recruit and hire relatives of its refugee employees. The employee with the best command of English is then responsible for training and supervising his or her relatives.

- Companies interviewed reported they pay employees a bonus for recommending their friends who actually get hired by the company. If the newly hired employee is successful for the first three months, the friend who recommended that person gets a second bonus. This causes a strong motivation for the original employee to be selective in whom he or she recommends and also to provide buddy help and advice to the newly hired friend.

- One employer who recruited workers through the local Private Industry Council remarked that past workers were of a higher quality than those currently being recruited from the PIC. He indicated that the earlier employees were working through the PIC with a member from

the community from which they came. The newer PIC representative was not from the neighborhood and didn't know the families well and had less influence in the neighborhood when it came to working with families on employment needs. A person from within the community/ neighborhood may be much more effective with networking, follow-up, and reinforcing work values from within the neighborhood.

e. Training

- Many companies are now offering tuition reimbursement programs in addition to in-house training programs and the more common on-the-job training. Educational support is generally funded at a 100 percent level if required for the job and at 50 or 75 percent if not required but considered to enhance the job performance. Several companies allow employees to take almost any course and be reimbursed. In Hawaii and Guam, some hotels and other hospitality industries are beginning to require that employees take training in job-related Japanese and also learn something about Japanese culture and customs because a large percentage of their market involves Japanese visitors.

- For those employees who do not speak English as a native language, many companies are providing either onsite or off-site language instruction. One company donated one hour of paid time and asked the employee to donate one hour of free time. The classes were scheduled between major work shifts, usually in the evening as the workers were coming off their shift. When classes were offered using volunteer teachers, attendance was poor and students didn't seem committed. The company decided to hire an ESL teacher to provide instruction onsite. Within a short time, they found the class to be extremely successful. When the company demonstrated its support and commitment to helping its employees, the employees performed well.

- An Idaho company has hired two teachers to develop an employment development course. Employees learn how to get along with others and about career ladders.

- A company in the retail field issues each employee a training passport which contains the employee's photo and a record of all his or her training and promotions. This passport is reviewed every year as part of the employee's performance review. Results of the review determine the employee's pay scale.

- Some companies are finding it necessary to provide remedial training in basic skills such as writing, mathematics, and communications.

Generally these classes are worded as worker upgrading to avoid the negative connotation of remediation.

- Classes on customer relations are sometimes taught using role playing. Employees are asked to bring in actual case samples which get reviewed.

- When problems are found that are group based, one Idaho company brings in outside staff who do team exercises with the whole group to resolve the problems.

- Regular performance evaluation at some companies includes an analysis of skills each employee needs to upgrade. A plan is then developed and implemented to achieve the goals set between the employee and supervisor.

  At one company, employees evaluate the supervisor who trains them. This allows the employee an opportunity to express concerns about what didn't work well and also to identify positive training strategies that can be duplicated in other training programs.

- Training in some companies goes beyond technical skills. Interpersonal communications, maintaining good grooming and a professional image, time management, how to communicate with your boss, and self-concept are the focus at other companies.

- Interpersonal communication is provided at one site which includes basic communication skills, active listening, "I-Messages," feedback and questioning skills. A total of eight hours of training is provided.

- One site provided a Continuing Education Program with certification at four levels. Ten hours of Continuing Education Units are required to certify to Level 1 within a department. Approved course topics were provided and participation was a joint decision between the supervisor and the employee. This program has been very successful for those who may be intimidated by a campus atmosphere.

  Participants found that they could earn and get credit for the courses they took. It is a positive incentive for helping employees continue their education in a setting where they feel comfortable. It builds self-confidence and esteem of employees. For the company, it helps keep the employees current in a market that is quickly changing.

Classes were chosen for their relevance to company needs. For example, for this particular site, there is such a fast pace of change, employers felt they needed workers who could do basic algebra in order to work with the company statistical production evaluation programs. They found that many women signed up for these courses because they provided basic math in addition to algebra. Women with math anxiety were able to overcome many of the barriers because the instruction was paced according to the needs of the student. The student decided when to enroll in which level of classes. Classes were offered in decimals and fractions, basic math, and algebra. Math classes were scheduled early in the morning, usually at 6:00 a.m.

- Mentoring was being used at one site. A manager/mentor relationship is established with new employees to help with networking and norms of the company, to provide activities to understand the "why" behind the "how" of policies and procedures, to improve on a faster learning curve, to provide support among new hires, to increase interaction with managers, and to improve employee commitment to the organization. A series of social activities which include both mentor and employee are established at specific intervals during the first six months of employment. Employees begin with an orientation, are assigned a mentor, and within the first week, mentor and employee have dinner together. There is a new employee dinner, a barbecue, and several other social occasions planned to help mentors and employee establish a solid working relationship.

  This same site offers courses on employee integration and communication as part of the orientation. Four sessions for a total of 14 hours give new employees an overview/history of the company and an overview of each functional area. The functional staff and General Manager share this information and have lunch with the new employees.

  All employees of one site attend four sessions (14 hours) on working at the company which includes understanding the company philosophy and work environment. The focus is on relating performance, pay, and development to the philosophy of the work environment.

- All new hires at this same company receive training in satisfying the customers which emphasizes strength skills for creating good relations with internal/external customers. The goals is to increase an awareness and sensitivity to dealing with customers and improve communication skills.

One company has a cooperative arrangement with local community colleges. The company brings in vans to the plant site, and the community college offers GED classes between work shifts.

A financial institution demonstrates its commitment to continual learning and training. All new employees are automatically enrolled in the company's training arm; entry-level employees receive a week of training away from the worksite at the time of hire. The company offers a clear definition of advancement opportunities and provides the training needed to move into the career web. Employees are encouraged to design a career plan with their managers that identifies short- and long-term goals. Job descriptions and requirements for new positions are clearly described in a catalogue. The coursework is a combination of correspondence, self-study, and classroom work. It is done after work, on the employees' time, but the institution provides the instruction.

- One company was impressed by the success of its "Executive Leadership Institute" in fostering team building skills, and is piloting a two to three-week miniversion for secretaries and clerical workers.

  This company and the VTI were also participating in a program to serve current employees, called "Technical Skills Upgrading." Originally designed to provide language skills to the 28 company-identified limited English speakers, it has become a program serving 62 employees, including native English speakers. The program provides four classes in English, all offered at the company site, half on employee time, half on employer time. This project is also funded under a grant from the Washington Job Skills Project.

f. Supervision

- Supervision varied widely across the companies we interviewed. In some cases the supervision was considered minimal. In other cases the supervision was close, especially for the first six months when some companies moved people into permanent positions. Line supervisors often had the responsibility to delegate, oversee, do on-the-job training, monitor performance, evaluate, provide feedback, and check on the balance of work performed. In some companies, line supervisors also were responsible for hiring new employees in their unit.

- Supervisors sometimes assign a new employee to a buddy from whom to learn. Other companies assign new employees to the lead on a team.

- In some companies, team operations have become common, with more team members responsible for training and supervising others.

- The training of supervisors also varied widely from no training to a company in Hawaii that requires an 11-week training for all supervisors. Appraisal performance was considered an important area of supervisor training in several companies.

- One site used a Creative/People Management class of 16 hours to train supervisors. An external class uses a computerized tool called the Social Style Profile to delineate an individual's style of interpersonal interaction as seen by others. It also measures versatility in being able to interact with different social styles. The employees' department pays for the course.

  At one site, supervisory training included managing and performance evaluation and pay, Affirmative Action and interviewing and selection, company finance, health and safety management, benefits, and personnel guidelines. A heavy emphasis of the company philosophy was introduced to the training curriculum.

g. Motivation

- Getting employees to show up for work regularly and on time is a major problem for many employers. One company in Oregon has an attendance lottery every month. It found that about half of the eligible employees were Laotians.

- Some companies have profit sharing; so it is to each employee's advantage to give his or her full effort.

- Shares of stock are offered as incentives to employees in some companies.

- Recognition as the outstanding employee of the month is popular in certain companies. Pay bonuses, posting of photos of such people, special parking spots, promotions, and free trips are sometimes offered as rewards. Rewards are given for good attendance, outstanding team membership, and customer service.

- Workers in a company in Guam are anxious for cross-training, because they can get the salary level of the person they substitute for during the period for which they fill in.

h. Business-Education Partnerships

- Although the focus of this study was on entry-level workers rather than on partnerships, several employers described various ways they were assisting the local schools. For example, one company encourages employees to volunteer as tutors of at-risk students. In addition to helping the children involved, the employer told us it was perceived as a good alternative for teaching employees how to improve listening skills and to get along with people from different backgrounds.

- An example of a partnership involving the state, education, and a private company to provide entry-level workers with skills was found in Washington. This program locates disadvantaged, unemployed workers through Target, a subcontractor to the Employment Security Department. The participants are eligible to participate at no cost in a 12-week course at the Lake Washington Vocational Technical Institute, which includes coursework in pre-employment skills, basic skill training, and manufacturing skills. The course entitled "Manufacturing Process Technology," is developed in conjunction with the company and includes transferable and company-specific occupational skills. The manufacturer we interviewed was participating in the pilot project and had agreed to hire all 40 graduates of the first class. The entire first class is now employed, and the project has been expanded to other companies. The program is funded through three sources: The Washington Job Skills Program, the VTI, and the manufacturing company.

  Business/education partnerships that are developed at the local level help to foster collaboration and build common goals between business and education. Several companies reported participating in partnerships and found them to be a good opportunity to be involved in school-related activities in a productive way.

- One company cited summer internships in its bank for high school business education teachers. The internships were designed to bring teachers into the business environment to learn hands-on techniques in banking that can be passed on to students in the classroom.

- One other organization in Oregon has a staff member whose task it is to develop on-going programs with the schools that provide internships to students at the secondary and postsecondary levels. This staff person begins at early grade levels and does onsite visits to classrooms to provide some career exploration to children to orient them toward identifying their skills and interests and to communicate expectations and information about the work world. She visits all grade levels and will continue to do so with the expectation that students will learn the

kinds of courses needed at elementary and secondary levels to plan for their future careers. Her target audience is educationally and economically-disadvantaged students.

The organization then provides internships for students during summer months where they are trained in fields such as engineering, business management, accounting, construction, and data processing. She expressed a growing concern about the lack of engineering students. The company has a department that gives tours by ex-teachers who can communicate with students at various levels. Long-range planning helps this company identify goals, affirmative action planning, and the needs for future workers.

Another human resources director mentioned she had wanted to develop internships for students but was unable to identify the appropriate school person to work with in setting up a program. School-business collaboration in these efforts needs to be visible and organized with a specific person identified as the school or site partnership representative. Vision, careful planning, and commitment are critical ingredients for success.

i. Handicapped/Special Needs Populations

- The special needs group mentioned most frequently by the employers we interviewed was refugees and others with limited-English proficiency. They are often paired up with buddies who know more English. In many cases, the work attitude of these employees was considered excellent. Several employers mentioned having ESL instructors teach English classes for several months. They are provided at no cost to employees. A Hawaii company hired a deaf man who had trouble communicating with co-workers. Now he does it by writing. Other employees have enjoyed learning sign language to use with him.

- An employee with a learning disability had trouble working with others so the company set up a job where he works by himself and he is doing okay. Another learning disabled person had a problem when told to do three things. The personnel manager talked with his supervisors and they arranged for him to do only one task at a time.

8. KEY POLICY ISSUES

For too long we've thought education, training, and workplace practices were someone else's problem: basic skills and training were the school's problem; children were their parents' problem; workplace policies were business' or labor's problem. Now we can no longer pretend that our education, social

welfare, and economic development problems are separate. Our ability to have an educated workforce, to protect children from poverty, to raise our quality of life and standard of living, and to increase productivity, rely in part on a recognition that our social, educational, and economic gains are integrated. The attention we pay to public education, to youth at risk, and to children in poverty, affect the quality of our future workforce and our ability to compete in the world marketplace. Policy makers have begun to acknowledge how interrelated their goals are: that investing in education and training is an economic development strategy as critical as job creation or retention strategies; that the new welfare programs designed to move clients successfully into the world of work depend on a workplace that accommodates the needs of families; that those preparing youth and adults for the world of work need to stay attuned to the changing needs of employers.

Worker preparation and work and family policies are a bridge between our social welfare and economic development goals. These policies are of particular significance for workers whose attachment to the workforce is marginal and are at risk of failing to succeed in the workplace. This includes workers who drop in and out of employment due to lack of work skills, limited educational background, limited-English proficiency, learning or physical handicaps, or because of conflict with family responsibilities. Many of these workers, in what we have defined as entry-level positions, i.e., those not requiring a high school education or vocational training, find workplace policies and practices are the key to their success in remaining employed, to developing their skills and marketability, and to successfully managing work and family responsibilities.

What role does public policy play in offering these programs and benefits? Innovative practices are mandated in some states such as Oregon's parental leave law; some are offered because of an incentive program such as onsite or release time English as a Second Language or GED classes sponsored by public sector training grants. Many workplace practices are left up to the marketplace. An important task for public policy makers is to determine the right mix: what is the role of government mandate? Of public incentives? When are practices best left up to the private sector? Public/private partnerships play a critical role in designing and implementing new ways to provide the life-long learning and social supports critical to this population.

The findings of this study with its special focus on entry-level workers have policy implications for education, business, economic development, and social welfare. They add new insights to a continuing discussion of the implications of our transforming economy, and in particular to the changing workforce and the changing workplace.

Changing Workforce

The changing characteristics of our work force have been well documented in recent reports such as Workforce 2000. Our workforce is aging and will include proportionately more limited-English speakers, more workers with young and elderly dependents, and more educationally disadvantaged. The increase in the number of working women with young dependents has been dramatic. In 1987, 65 percent of mothers with children 18 and under were employed, including 57 percent of the mothers of preschool children. The fastest growing segment of the labor force is mothers with children under the age of three. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1987). Estimates show that one of every four workers is dealing with child care problems. At the same time, the fastest growing cohort of the population is aged 75 and older. Many analysts feel that elder care issues will soon be critical for many workers.

Many companies are actively recruiting older workers as a source of personnel, especially temporary agencies and fast food chains.

Changing Workplace

The workplace is undergoing a period of rapid change. Both the types of jobs and the entry-level skills required are fundamentally different than they were just a few years ago. According to Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, "By the end of the century, an estimated 5 to 15 million manufacturing jobs will be restructured. An equal number of service jobs will probably be obsolete." (National Alliance of Business, 1986). This report estimates that of the 16 million new jobs created by 1995, 90 percent will be in the service sector. At the same time, the nature of work has changed. Most jobs now require some type of post-high school training; and problem solving, adaptability, teamwork, and familiarity with technology are increasingly referred to by employers as "basic skills."

At the same time, employees' expectations of what happens in the workplace have evolved. We now rely on the workplace for many social benefits and protections which are offered through government mandate in other countries. We rely on our employers for health care for ourselves and our dependents and security in our old age through pensions, paid vacation, and sick leave. Now, as employers are feeling the effect of their employees juggling work and family responsibilities and find they need a better prepared workforce, many are beginning to respond with assistance for child care and elder care, with teaching basic skills such as reading and writing to workers, and with developing teamwork and problem solv-

ing skills. Many of these programs are seen by employers as particularly important in attracting and retaining entry-level workers, who are a decreasing population due to demographic changes.

9. POLICY QUESTIONS

Understanding implications of the changing workforce and workplace is critical to any discussion of workplace policy; the particular task of this report is to consider the special impact of these changes on entry-level workers. How can our education and worker preparation and our social policies reflect these changes and meet the needs of entry-level workers? The 58 interviews conducted with employers in five states and Guam have identified problems employers are facing and how they are dealing with them. This has helped us define public policy questions in two areas:

- What can we do to prepare successful workers entering jobs requiring a high school education or less?

- How can the workplace become more responsive to family needs of this population?

Education and Worker Preparation. Our findings show that employers are already experiencing the effects of changing demographics and are actively recruiting entry-level workers with good work habits. Some offer training opportunities specifically to attract workers or to make up for the lack of advancement opportunities. Employers interviewed clearly indicated that the changing nature of work demands a new set of skills, sometimes called the new basics. These include adaptability, flexibility, problem solving, and teamwork skills. The "old" basics—reading, writing, communicating, and computing—are still critical. And workplace readiness—punctuality, attendance, appropriate dress, and reliability—is still of prime importance to employers.

- The first question to be addressed is whose role it is to ensure a work-ready workforce. Although we rely mostly on the schools to provide entry-level skills, it has become common for employers to provide training even in the most basic areas: reading, writing, and communicating. With a tight labor market and a significant nonwork- ready population, we must find new ways to address this community and national problem.

  Public/private partnerships have designed successful models and must continue to find new solutions for low-income, limited-English, disadvantaged minority, and at-risk citizens to allow them to participate in

the workforce. Educators and the private sector still have much to learn from each other in terms of strategies and techniques for special populations such as older workers.

- Where and how should youth learn about work expectations? A frequent complaint among employers is that entry-level workers have been so sheltered from the workplace and have such unrealistic expectations-- mostly derived from television shows--they are simply not work ready.

  This raises two policy questions: First, how can educators better acquaint youth with basic work expectations? Second, how can employers better learn reasonable expectations, and develop the best ways for supervising youth, working with employees from different cultures, and helping entry-level workers learn?

- Employer-sponsored education must be examined. An employer's legitimate concern in subsidizing employee education programs is to benefit the company. Although some employers do sponsor GED programs, college tuition reimbursement, or even a basic liberal arts education, many others sponsor classes that are occupation and company specific. Education is for the whole person and teaches life skills. Generally, on-the-job training is specific for the job. Employees may receive substantial training, yet find themselves without transferable skills or with in-house certification that is not recognized even in the same industry. In times of rapid economic change, we must all be prepared to change jobs and learn new skills. Entry-level employees, with only minimal education and work experience are more vulnerable to frequent disruptions in employment.

- How can small business provide training programs and remain competitive? Small businesses account for the majority of new jobs yet limited resources often prohibit them from offering programs to upgrade the skills of their workforce. At present, "200-300 large companies account for one half of all formalized private sector training." (Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000, p. 4). What new solutions can be found, perhaps through pooling of resources, trade associations or public/private partnerships, to provide education and training to small business entry-level employees?

Social Policy. This study found a high employer awareness of work and family issues. Many cited specific examples of losing women employees due to work/family conflict. At the same time, many employers are unaware of the range of stresses and responsibilities, or of appropriate workplace re-

sponses. The most recent Conference Board Report shows that out of six million employers in our country, only 3,300 have developed child care programs and policies. Although few employers in our survey have a child care assistance program, the study did find examples (mostly concentrated in a few companies) of nearly every strategy identified in the literature search: onsite child care, subsidies, information and referral, brown bag lunches on parenting topics, flexible work hours, and part-time options. Most employers said they were aware of the need for some type of child care assistance, or were "looking into it," or anticipated that it would be offered as a benefit in the future. One of the companies offering onsite child care noted that they have had over 200 information requests from other companies. Complex policy questions on work and family benefits and entry-level workers remain:

- To what extent do these benefits assist entry-level employees? With the median income of these workers in the $5,000 to $8,000 range, how viable are options such as part-time work, or nonsubsidized onsite child care? Nonsubsidized onsite child care in the Seattle area costs an employee an average of $500 to $600 per month for one child, far beyond the reach of most entry-level workers.

- How will the rising costs of health care and other benefits and new regulations requiring benefit coverage for part-timers working over 17.5 hours per week affect benefits programs? Some of the major employers interviewed offer the flexibility of part-time work at an employee's choice, but others noted they are now hiring entry-level workers only on a part-time basis without benefits.

- What is the role of public policy in making available affordable child care and in requiring businesses to accommodate family needs? This is clearly the most difficult question as public policy struggles to keep up with the effects of the changing economy and changing workforce. Some advocate targeting resources to special populations, for example, subsidizing child care for single mothers moving out of welfare dependency. Some argue that the lack of a national family policy with legislation such as parental leave that uniformly covers all workers has become a costly burden to us as a society. (see Spalter-Roth, Unnecessary Losses)

Educational Policy

Three important educational policy issues were considered in designing this entry-level worker study. These concerns deal with: a) basic skills and workplace values in today's high school graduates; b) the need to become more effective in working with at-risk youth; and c) the role that vocational education should play in our secondary schools.

a. Basic Skills and Workplace Values

What are the basic skills needed in today's workplace? How adequately prepared are entry-level workers to handle the basic skill demands? What are business and industry doing to upgrade workplace literacy? Have the attitudes and values of entry-level workers changed over the past five years? Are there methods that business and industry are using to improve basic skills and worker attitudes that could be adapted by our schools?

Over the past decade, the concept of basic skills has expanded from the three R's to include technology literacy, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking. While educators and people in the private sector agree on the importance of the new basic skills, employers tend to be more critical of the competencies possessed by recent high school graduates. (Building a Quality Workforce, 1988.) As a result of the demand for increased proficiency in areas like literacy and technology, business is now having to invest annually over $40 billion in training to upgrade the skills of employees. What can educators learn from the techniques and motivational procedures being used in industrial training?

b. At-Risk Youth

Despite the fact that our nation is experiencing a devastatingly high dropout rate of approximately 25 percent, our schools are now educating a far greater percentage of our young people than at any time in the past. Millions of our young people are truly at risk—at risk of dropping out before high school graduation; at risk of health problems including AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse; at risk of antisocial behavior that could lead to incarceration; and at risk of remaining unemployed or underemployed. At the same time that the at-risk problem is growing, the tightening labor market supply has led many employers to hire people that five years ago they would not even have considered interviewing.

The recent study of Workplace Basics by the American Society for Training and Development: "The nation is facing a startling demographic reality that isn't likely to go away. The group of 16-to-24 year olds that is the traditional source of new workers is shrinking, and employers will have to reach into the ranks of the less qualified to get their entry-level workers who will come from groups where historically human resource investments have been deficient." (Carnevale, Gainer, and Meltzer, 1988, p. ii).

Perhaps some of the techniques used in business and industry to recruit, motivate, train, and supervise those entering the workforce can shed some

light on ways schools can work with those students that may need additional help to be successful.

Poor grades and low self-esteem are key factors that put students at risk for school failure or dropping out. These factors heavily influence their job performance as well. Strategies for building successes into school-related activities need to be a focus for raising self-esteem and keeping students motivated. For at-risk students, a strong emphasis on the development of both life and work skills will help prepare them for adulthood and employment.

Mentoring programs are being used successfully in the workforce to support new employees in their transition to the company and to communicate expectations. These programs are also effective in the schools and help students plan for careers and provide positive role models. Mentoring will aid the development of communication and relationship skills that at-risk youth often lack and that are critical for the workplace.

Programs include work experience, career information, employability skills, life/work planning, and others emphasizing the development of strong basic skills that will help at-risk youth make a more successful transition to the world of work and adulthood.

c. Role of Secondary Vocational Education

The role of vocational education at the secondary level is coming under great scrutiny these days. In the past, employers have said, "Give me people who can read, write, and do simple math and I'll train them for the jobs I have available." Today they want good academic skills and much more. A recent survey by the American Society for Training and Development has identified seven skill groups wanted by employers: learning to learn, the 3 R's, communications, problem solving, personal management, group effectiveness, and leadership. (Carnevale, Garner, and Meltzer, 1988). In their report Investing in Our Children, the Committee for Economic Development (1985) supports the need for vocational education as a vehicle for providing occupational skills training needed by our youth. The Unfinished Agenda prepared by the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (1984) broadens the view of secondary vocational education as occupational training and stresses its role in "developing individual students in five areas: 1) personal skills and attitudes; 2) communication, computation and technological literacy; 3) employability skills; 4) broad and specific occupational skills and knowledge; and 5) foundation for career planning and lifelong learning." (p. 3).

At the other extreme is the National Science Board Commission's report, Educating Americans for the 21st Century (1983). It favors improvement in technological literacy, but is against job skills training at the high school level. Thus, it is clear that no common agreement exists regarding whether high schools should teach specific occupational skills.

Because of the disagreements among people in business and industry regarding the importance of occupational skills training at the high school level, we included some questions in our study to obtain the perceptions of employers regarding this issue.

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

This study focused on identifying promising practices used by business and industry in working with entry-level employees. One value of the study was to identify and share some of these practices with other people in the private sector who are facing the same challenges. A second value was to determine if some of these practices have implications for improving education and training. Nine areas were identified for consideration by those responsible for education and training: a) new skills; b) peer influence; c) common purpose; d) expanded learning opportunities; e) involvement; f) accountability; g) cross-training; h) special training; and i) business partnerships. Each is described here.

a. New Skills: In addition to the traditional characteristics employers look for in workers—adequate basic skills in reading, computation, communication, and reasoning, a good work ethic, and responsibility— employers in our survey also mentioned ability to respond to changes in work and the environment, ability to take criticism, understanding of the business culture, customer orientation, ability to work effectively as part of a team, problem solving, and interest in continuing to learn.

   Some of these characteristics, such as basic skills in reading and computation, have been recognized as important by educators and given attention. Other characteristics such as responsibility, problem solving, teamwork, and flexibility, are areas that call for greater attention by those in our schools.

   While schools keep a record of student attendance, relatively few schools, especially at the junior or senior high level, recognize and reward students for good attendance. Those in education may want to examine the reward systems in business and industry for good employee performance, and consider which of these systems could be used or modified to fit the school environment. Some of the business systems

that might apply could include: monthly posting of students with outstanding attendance, cooperative behavior, initiative, or progress in grades. Group rewards such as trips or meals might be used in schools where students work as teams. The "buddy" system, in which an experienced employee works to orient and help a new employee, could also be used more commonly in education, perhaps in having an experienced student orient a newly arrived one.

b. Peer Influence: An interesting strategy used by some employers to recruit quality workers is to give a bonus to existing employees who recommend a friend who gets hired by their company. Generally, a second bonus is provided about three months later if the newly hired employee performs well. This takes advantage of several basic principles. Good existing employees understand what is expected on the job and are unlikely to recommend people they know who might turn out to be an embarrassment to them. Conversely, once their friend is hired, they are more likely to be a buddy to him or her to help that person succeed on the job.

   Since bonding between teenagers is also an influence on some school dropouts who encourage their friends to also drop out of school, the reverse process could occur. Students could be rewarded for encouraging a dropout friend to return to high school, and a second reward could be provided if their friend re-enters, attends class regularly for three months, and gets at least average grades.

c. Common Purpose: Employers stressed the importance of a corporate philosophy that gets communicated effectively and consistently throughout the company to every employee. Efforts to instill a sense of common purpose and team pride in accomplishment could be undertaken in the schools. Many students seem to lack a sense of purpose for being in school and show little pride, except perhaps for a winning football team. Company supervisors are encouraged to talk to any employee for personal support. Yet, in many schools, teachers don't feel part of a purposeful team and may simply refer students with personal problems to a counselor instead of first talking with the student.

d. Expanded Learning Opportunities: We were encouraged by the number of companies that are willing to send employees to school or other locations for special training. Yet, public schools seldom send students to other locations when special training or help is needed. This may be due in part to state laws or liability concerns. If so, these policies should be re-examined. There is often the feeling an individual school should be able to handle all training needs of all students. There are a few noteworthy exceptions, however, where a school will encourage some of its

students to take a special class in a neighboring district in a centralized facility, or at some nearby postsecondary or private institution. It would be helpful to students if these opportunities were more commonplace.

e. Involvement: Many companies are now recognizing the importance of teamwork and of helping employees feel involved in the performance and success of the company. Quality circle techniques, merit recognition for employees whose suggestions are accepted and implemented, and early involvement in designing employee benefit packages were also observed as ways of involving employees in the leadership and decision making processes. Yet in our schools students are seldom consulted regarding operation and governance of the school, new courses to offer, or ways to improve the learning process. Occasionally, a few students are elected to serve on a student council but don't have opportunities to offer suggestions or affect change. These processes should be expanded to make each student feel that his or her opinions are valued and used. This would encourage youth to develop both the team and leadership skills needed for success in adult life. Using the involvement process from business, educators might also have students more actively involved in evaluating instruction and suggesting ways to improve it.

f. Accountability: Most companies described the efforts they made to monitor and assess employee performance, especially during the first six months on the job. Many supervisors are being trained to work with absentee problems, follow prescribed corrective action processes, provide remediation, switch employees to a different unit level, make referrals for special help, and recognize and reward employees who are performing well. In public schools, students seldom have a single supervisor who will monitor their performance regularly and hold them accountable for their successes and failures.

   At the unit level, some personnel directors reported bringing in outside staff to do team exercises with a whole group if problems are found. A parallel to this in education might be a school central office person trained to work with a teacher and entire class if there were problems with discipline or inadequate learning performance.

g. Cross-training: Employers repeatedly talked about the need for employees to be flexible and learn a variety of jobs rather than be prepared for only a single position. One company gave an employee the actual salary of a higher position for the period of time that person was able to successfully perform in the absence of the other person. Cross-training is becoming common. In education, especially at the high school level, the norm is that each staff person has her or his specific duty and is not

prepared to substitute for a fellow teacher, counselor, or administrator in that person's absence. It may be time to begin cross-training educators to fulfill a wider set of roles than they have performed in the past.

h. Special Training: In addition to on-the-job training, specialized job skills training, and opportunities for attending college classes, many companies offer one- or two-hour workshops to cover topics of general interest that might relate to parenting, budgeting, conflict resolution, drugs and alcohol abuse, community volunteerism, etc. These workshops are open to anyone who wants to attend.

   Schools might want to institute similar seminars over the lunch hour or some other period of the day. The topics could be selected by student interest, and follow-up sessions could be added if warranted. Instead of short-term workshops, educators tend to feel if a topic is to be taught, it should be offered as a full semester course. One- or two-hour specialty topics may be good alternatives to capture the attention span of many young people. Educators could also learn techniques from some businesses in the use of learning styles, self-guided instruction, and use of computers, videotapes, and other techniques that allow learners to advance at their own pace.

i. Career Paths: A number of employers spoke of the importance of giving employees a clear view of career path options as a way of motivating them and allowing them to see the larger picture beyond their immediate job. In education, we tend to neglect helping students see the relevance of what they are learning and how it leads to other courses, further education beyond high school, or career preparation. As a result, many students express frustration at not having a clear picture of what is to be learned and why. School counselors, in many cases, are well informed about college requirements and share this information with students. Students are less likely to get accurate information on job preparation requirements or on how they can articulate vocational program competencies into those included in postsecondary programs. Greater attention to these latter areas could help more students see relevance to what they are learning.

j. Business Partnerships: Some of the businesses interviewed are already involved in some form of business-education partnership and spoke with pride about what they and their employees were doing. A few recognized that successful partnerships were benefiting their company as well as the schools. For example, one employer spoke about the need for some of his employees to learn to listen better to others and become more sensitive to people with different backgrounds. These employees

could perhaps be exposed to this knowledge by a company training workshop, but he felt a more experiential way would be for some to volunteer to tutor low income minority students and thus learn these skills from direct application.

For companies not already involved with schools but open to such possibilities, concern was expressed that, "We don't know who or how to access school contacts when we want to get involved with the schools." Another employer complained about his employees being put on a waiting list to be mentors when he wanted quicker involvement. Encouraging public/private partnerships with education may help resolve some of these problems.

In addition to partnership activities focused directly on students, our interviews suggested the untapped potential for educators to participate in some corporate training on issues such as motivation, teaching literacy and communication skills to refugees, developing teamwork, learning to understand and relate to people with different cultural backgrounds, and supervisory training. In return, if educators are offering inservice training on these or similar topics, they may wish to invite members of the business community to participate, or better yet, plan joint staff training sessions where appropriate. For example, postsecondary educators having experience in effectively working with older workers and workers with limited-English proficiency could take the lead in proposing joint training in these areas for other teachers and business people.

11. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATING

An underlying premise of this study is that education, social welfare, and economic development strategies for successful entry-level workers are integrated; therefore, it is critical that findings be disseminated to policy makers in all of those areas. Preliminary findings were presented in a panel symposium at the Work Now and in the Future 5 conference. The study has been discussed informally with policy and community leaders in the region and with researchers and policy analysts nationally who have provided input into the study design. This includes representatives from the Conference Board, the National Alliance of Business, Education Commission of the States, the National Institute for Work and Learning, the Roosevelt Center for American Policy, local Private Industry Councils, local Chambers of Commerce, the Washington Department of Social and Human Services, representatives of trade associations, the State of Washington Economic Development Board, the Oregon Department of Economic Development, the Washington State Labor Council, and the Bureau of National

Affairs. We anticipate continued contact with these organizations as we disseminate the report and consider further research.

Findings will be communicated through two formal reports, presentations at conferences and meetings, and news articles. NWREL and NPC view dissemination as the key to policy implementation and development. The report will be disseminated to an audience of policy makers and leaders who can help us identify further research most useful to them.

Formal Reports. This report will be disseminated to each state superintendent of public instruction in the NWREL region and to each state director of vocational education. The Northwest Policy Center will adapt the report to its occasional paper format and disseminate it to its mailing list of 2,500 constituents in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington representing public policy makers, business and community leaders, and media. The report will be sent to attendees of recently held conferences such as "Strengthening the Workforce-Employer Supports for Child Care" and the "New Family Conference."

Conferences and Meetings. The findings will also be presented to meetings of groups representing policy makers and community leaders, policy directors of state economic development departments, Business Roundtables, the Training and Retraining Task Force of the Washington Economic Development Board, Chamber of Commerce, the Association for Supervision and Training Development, and the Pacific Northwest Personnel Managers Association. The Northwest Policy Center will assist in identifying appropriate audiences in the five states of their region and in making contact with them.

Of prime importance will be a working session for policy leaders representing education, business, and economic development to discuss findings and future directions for this work. The working session will be convened by the Northwest Policy Center in early 1989.

News Articles and Public Education. Findings will reach a business and public audience through newspaper and business journal articles. A feature article is planned for the business section of the Seattle Times, the region's largest newspaper; other newspapers and state business journals in the Northwest will be approached as well. Discussions will be held with organizations such as the Bureau of National Affairs concerning publishing findings for a national audience.

NWREL Audience. A summary of this study will be prepared for the NWREL newsletter which is sent to state school chief officers in the North-

west, administrators, board members and teachers. A total of 15,000 schools receive this report. At the national level, the report will be entered and disseminated through the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC).

12. POTENTIAL FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH

NWREL and NPC are exploring the potential for continued collaborative research on workplace practices and entry-level workers. NPC is interested in a continuing policy focus on entry-level workers in the following areas: training for entry-level workers and new welfare programs; new workplace strategies for entrepreneurs and small businesses employing entry-level workers; the role of worker training and benefits in flexible manufacturing; and recruitment and training of older workers for entry-level positions. NPC has agreed to explore funding options including foundation support to expand research to one or two of these areas in early 1989.

NWREL is particularly interested in the training needs of young entry-level workers and those who may be economically disadvantaged and need special assistance. NWREL is also interested in the implications of these findings for education and training, in further developments in business-education partnerships, and in workplace literacy interventions.

Also under consideration is an expansion of the Phase I study to follow up on findings. One option is to conduct personal or group interviews with a large number of entry-level workers to determine their experience on the job, the relevance of their schooling for their present job, perceptions of the impact of existing and possible employee benefits on their ability to balance work and family needs and to upgrade their work skills, views regarding the effectiveness of workplace training and supervision, and their views of work and the future of their jobs.

Interviews would be conducted to encourage complete responses from the target population, some of whom have marginal literacy skills or limited-English capabilities. This study would be essential in understanding the workplace and the impact of workplace policies from the perspective of employees, and would complement the completed responses from personnel managers and education directors.

Another possible follow-up would be to take the findings from this pilot study and apply them to a written survey of several thousand companies throughout the Northwest states. The companies would be selected on a stratified random sample basis by state, size and type of industry. Personnel and online supervisors would be surveyed. This would provide us with

information on how widespread some of the exemplary practices are, the impact of existing and proposed state mandates and incentives, and insights into sectoral differences.

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APPENDIX A
Names of Individuals and Companies Interviewed

GUAM

David Whitford, Training Director
Pacific Star Hotel

John Calvo, Asst. Personnel Director
Guam Dept. of Administration

Julie Merrill
Hawaiian Rocks

Richard Tennessen
Duty Free Shoppers

Maria Connelley, Emp. Director
Consolidated Civilian Personnel
Office, U.S. Navy Station

HAWAII

Carol Sun, Personnel
Au's Plumbing

Howard Nagata, Special Projects Dir.
MacDonald's Corp

Dee Dee Gauff, Field Service Engineer
Digital Equipment Corp.

Janet Cummings
St. Philomena's Child Center

Estelle Hepton
Hawaii Electric

Gerald Sakata, Personnel
Zippy's

Jerry Onuma, Personnel
Hyatt Regency in Waikiki

Jo-Ann T. Gakiya,
Human Resources Dept.
Safeway Stores, Inc.

OREGON

Elaine Thomas
Bonneville Power Administration

Penny Johnson
Port of Portland

Pat Daiker
Express Temporary Service

Dave Chrisman
Burger King Restaurant

Pete Barnett
Omark Industries Inc.

Richard Grabhill
Tigard Electric

Cliff Hamlow
R&H Construction Co.

Vicki Hurley
Tektronix Inc.

Tru Del L. Weidemann
Protocol Systems, Inc.

Greg Ness
Standard Insurance Co.

Rick Dols
Pacific Power and Light Co.

Lisa Long
Benj. Franklin Savings and
Loan Assoc.

Phil Conti
Lattice Works of Oregon

Bill Bachofner
Bachofner Electric, Inc.

Jacki Lindquist
Northwest Natural Gas Co.

Jim Strain
First Interstate Bank

Cynthia Devich
Portland General Electric

ALASKA

Kathy Moss
Providence Hospital
Store

Janet Nye
Captain Cooke Hotel

Lee Gregoire
Military Management Services

Sue MacAlwain
Nordstrom Department

Steve Dressor
University of Alaska

IDAHO

Betty Sims
Micron Technology, Inc.
Group

Daniel J. Holbrook
Marriott Corp.

Scott Burton
Hewlett Packard

Dale R. Solyom
Boise Cascade Packaging

Linda Page
Ore-Ida Foods

Don Weaver
Idaho Personnel Commission

WASHINGTON

Judy Neuman
Helly-Hanson USA, Inc.

Donna Kahle
Carver Corp

Carol Turner
Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle

Kathy Barth
Seafirst Bank

Steve Nielsen
U.S. West

Mike Foss
Dunhill Temporary Systems

John Reynolds
Safeco

Ron Langdon
The Boeing Company

Tom Bryan
Seattle Times

Ron Hall
Westin Hotel

Anna Sestrich
Providence Medical Center

John Prumatico
Microsoft

Steve Hill and Alice Ketz
Weyerhaeuser Co.

Marla Williams
Genie Industries

APPENDIX B
Entry-Level Employee Interview Questions

1. What are the major jobs for which entry-level employees are hired? (entry-level positions are those not requiring more than a high school education)

2. Approximately how many entry-level employees have been hired over the past year?

3. How many of them are part-time?

4. Do you anticipate hiring about the same number of entry-level employees next year?

5. How does your company recruit entry-level employees?

6. In recruiting entry-level employees, do you give any preference to those applicants who have had vocational education in high school?

7. If yes, do you prefer occupation-specific training or broader skills transferable across occupations?

8. Have you noticed any changes in the characteristics of entry-level employees over the past few years?

9. (If yes) What changes?

10. What are the main characteristics you look for in entry-level employees?

11. What is their starting salary?

12. Are there any common problems or limitations you have noticed in new entry-level employees?

13. (If yes) What changes?

14. Are there any categories of entry-level employees who have a harder time becoming effective employees?

15. (If yes) What are their characteristics?

16. What problems do they have?

17. Does your company do anything special to help them?

18. If so, what?

19. What are the most common reasons why entry-level employees leave your company or are fired during the first year?

20. Approximately what percentage stay at least six months?

21. What ways do you use to recognize and reward entry-level employees who are performing in an excellent manner?

22. What kinds of supervision are provided to entry-level employees?

23. Is there any special training provided to their supervisors?

24. Many employers have expressed need for employees with: a) good basic skills (reading, writing, communicating); b) problem solving skills; c) teamwork; d) adaptability; and, e) regular attendance and punctuality. What assistance if any, does your company provide in each of these areas?

25. What types of training are provided to entry-level employees? (i.e., specific job skills, skills that would help in one's personal life, etc.)

26. By whom is the training provided?

27. Are any of the following benefits available for entry-level workers? a) college tuition reimbursement; b) other education or training benefits; c) profit sharing; d) incentive programs; e) quality circles; f) mentorships; g) peer/buddy help; h) special opportunities to advance in the company; i) employee assistance programs, medical plan (individual, dependent coverage), other benefits?

28. Which of the above benefits seem particularly attractive to entry-level workers?

29. Some employers include in their benefits package programs designed to assist employees in meeting work and family needs. Do you offer: a) assistance with child care—onsite, referral, vouchers, tax reduction, day care for sick children, latchkey support); b) parental leave (mother and/or father); c) unpaid leave to care for sick dependents; d) flexible work schedules; e) option for part-time work; f) assistance with elderly care; g) flexible cafeteria benefits; h) workshops related to personal and family needs; i) medical coverage for dependents; j) others?

30. Which of the above benefits seem particularly attractive to entry-level employees?

31. What would you like to see schools do to better prepare people for entry-level employment?

32. Are there some other companies or organizations you feel I should talk with to get examples of good employment and retention practices geared especially for the entry-level employee? Names, etc.

33. We appreciate your ideas in this interview. Do you have any concluding thought on ways to help entry-level employees become successful on the job?

APPENDIX C
Narrative Summary of Interview Responses

* Questions requiring only a yes or no response or those involving quantitative responses are omitted here.

*1. What are the positions for which entry-level employees are hired?

Positions considered entry-level in this study included production, assembly line, clerical, secretarial, receptionist, expeditors, assemblers, waiters/waitresses, parking valets, stewards, housekeeping, cooks, clean-up (restaurant), labor (trades), warehouse work, packing, driving, telephone operators, groundskeepers, cashiers, electronic assembly, machine operators, and word processors.

2. Approximately how many entry-level employees have been hired over the past year?

Companies reported hiring from as few as six entry-level workers to as many as 1,500.

3. How many of them are part-time?

The majority of respondents to this question reported hiring most entry-level workers as part-time employees. One person indicated a trend away from hiring full-time entry-level workers. Some employers hired nearly all entry-level workers on a full-time basis; some reported hiring part-time on a percentage basis.

4. Do you anticipate hiring about the same number of entry-level employees next year?

Approximately two-thirds of those interviewed reported that they would hire about the same number of entry-level employees next year.

5. How does your company recruit entry-level employees?

Employees are recruited through newspapers, JTPA, posted announcements in the workplace, informal networks, and throughout the Employment Service. Other methods of recruitment cited included contacting schools, the Equal Employment Office (to target recruitment for specific groups), Urban League, organizations such as Displaced Homemakers, community colleges, State Employment Agencies and using a 24-hour phone line. One employer found the job information line extremely helpful,

because it has a direct-dial number listed in the yellow pages of the phone directory. Some employers give employees bonus incentives if they recruit qualified people who will work 40 hours per week. High school internship programs were seen as a good resource for entry-level workers.

6. Do you give preference to applicants with Vocational Education?

Most respondents said they do not give preference unless they are looking for someone with a specific skill taught through a vocational education program or looking for people who will be able to move to different positions.

7. Do you prefer specific training or broader skills?

Except for specific areas such as secretarial, where typing, filing, and other skills for that particular job are required, all respondents indicated they wanted or preferred entry-level employees to have broad skills which allow for greater flexibility. At the same time, these employers recognized that specific training is required in such areas as accounting and business.

8. Have you noticed any changes in employees over the past few years?

Most employers responded affirmatively. Generally speaking, their perception is that entry-level workers of the past were of higher quality than those entering the workforce more recently. In some cases, "higher quality" was defined as having more positive attitudes toward work. Some respondents indicated a shortage of suitable entry-level clerical personnel over the last couple of years. Lack of knowledge and understanding regarding good work habits and skills were among the problems noted with today's entry-level workers. Respondents also indicated that more of these workers have poor attitudes and low motivation than workers in the past.

Several respondents, however, reported seeing more competitive and more qualified applicants. More minorities, women and older persons are applying for entry-level positions, and more applicants have had exposure to computer technology.

10. What are the main characteristics you look for in entry-level employees?

Employers most frequently reported that dependability, valuing the work ethic, having a positive attitude and motivation are important. However, after further probing, they cited more specific needs, such as people with good communication skills, an ability to take feedback and criticism, and a willingness and ability to adapt to changing times and tasks. Respondents expressed concerns that employees often lacked these skills.

Respondents also reported needing people with good technical skills, the capacity for teamwork, initiative, willingness to make a contribution, punctuality, dependability, the ability to think on one's feet, assertiveness, creativity, having a professional image, strong sales presence, math skills, planning and organizational skills, problem analysis, friendliness, good hygiene, strong basic skills, and the ability to transfer knowledge quickly.

11. What is their starting salary?

Salaries ranged from minimum wage to $12.00 per hour.

12. Are there any common problems or limitations you have noticed in new entry-level employees?

As noted above, respondents reported that new employees place less value on the work ethic than workers in the past. They also perceive today's employees as having an expectation that they should get more from the employer, demonstrating poor attendance, not being well prepared for their jobs, failing to call in when they will be absent, and often lacking the ability to focus. Many entry-level workers have additional problems, such as problems with transportation, lack of money to get to work, health problems, and use of drugs. Further problems noted by respondents include employee skill deficits, such as illiteracy, lack of math skills, lack of critical thinking skills, and lack of interpersonal skills. These workers tend not to be ready for change, have trouble getting used to working in an industrial environment, and stay on the job only a short time. Finally, some employers reported that male employees often have a difficult time with female supervisors and getting used to having many female coworkers.

Responses to this question can be categorized into specific areas of need including--

- Basic Skills
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Computations

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Ability to conceptualize
  - Organizational skills
  - Common sense
  - Clear communication of thoughts and ideas, etc.
  - Thinking fast on one's feet
  - Creativity

Analytical skills
Ability to focus and concentrate for reasonable periods of time
Ability to think beyond the immediate

- Communication Skills
  Interpersonal
  Conflict resolution
  Ability to work in teams
  Ability to deal with the public
  Assertiveness
  Ability to present oneself well

- Attitude and Motivation
  Willingness to learn
  Interest in the job as well as the income
  Responsibility
  Ability to get along with coworkers, e.g., of the opposite sex

- Technical Skills
  Definite labor shortage in people with experience with micros
  Requiring more sophisticated skills of entry-level employees (e.g., knowledge of algebra, word processing (several different systems)
  Experience with microcomputers
  Word processing skills
  Knowledge of algebra

- Employability skills
  Filling out an application neatly without spelling errors and strikeovers
  Appropriate dress for work
  Able to discuss abilities, interests
  Knowledge of how to conduct oneself in an interview
  Understanding the concept of work habits and work skills
  Previous work experience
  Good references

- Personal skills
  Ability to take feedback and criticism without taking it personally
  Ability to adapt to change, e.g., willingness to be reassigned
  Ability to make transitions easily
  Knowledge that there is a culture of the workplace to which employees must learn to adapt

- Gender issues

  Employers frequently reported that, where women were in supervisory roles, men often had problems taking directions from them. In apprenticeships, employers reported some men having problems because the trades have traditionally employed men, these men are not used to working with women on the crew, and they therefore feel they need to change their behavior because of the presence of women.

  Employers responded positively to the more gender-integrated workforce and acknowledged the contributions of women--especially in those fields that are male-dominated.

  All of the construction-related businesses that were interviewed reported having had at least one woman as an apprentice and/or journeyperson.

- Barriers to Employment

  Poverty

  Lack of transportation

  Lack of child care

  The barrier of poverty was reported to have a Catch-22 effect on entry-level workers: employees lacked many of the employability skills and attributes needed to perform well on the job. However, many of these skills are a result of exposure to the day-to-day work patterns of family and community. In a community where unemployment is high over multiple generations, opportunities for exposure to positive work habits become critical.

  One respondent indicated that it is difficult to work with an employee who lacked knowledge of such basic matters as the amount of money necessary for taking the bus to work or the need to make child care arrangements. Knowing how to plan to get to the job was viewed as a necessary basic skill. One employer suggested that teachers take students on a field trip to a local company using city transportation to teach the basics of getting to work.

- Drug Use

  Drug use and abuse were reported by many employers. Many reported that they do drug testing of applicants and eliminate those who test positive. Students need to be informed that drug testing is becoming a frequent practice. They need to understand how it is done and the implications of positive tests. Applicants who test positive are disqualified and usually not given a second opportunity to apply. One company reported a considerable drop in insurance and safety problems within the first year of drug testing.

- English Speaking Skills

  Many of the companies where these interviews were conducted hire new immigrants as entry-level workers. Often these employees have few or no English speaking skills. The growing number of new immigrants who will enter the workforce without English skills will put increasing pressure on companies to provide some training in English. Many employers who hire new immigrants reported that they find new immigrants to be excellent employees who are extremely responsible and hard working.

14. Are there any categories of entry-level employees who have a harder time becoming effective employees?

    Many respondents had difficulty and were uncomfortable answering this question because of its potential for singling out specific groups of people. However, most responded affirmatively to this question.

15. If yes, what are their characteristics?

    Characteristics included those with English as a second language, people coming from regimented systems, those who don't have work skills, those who have never learned how to accomplish something on their own, those without confidence, those who are young and/or disadvantaged, those who have been in well-defined jobs previously and are unable to adapt to less defined structures, those who haven't completed high school (they are less accountable and lack ability to complete projects), minorities, mentally and physically handicapped, and those who can't do self-evaluation and have poor attendance and attitudes.

16. What problems do they have?

    Alcohol and other drugs
    Lack of employability skills
    Lack of ability to effectively communicate with others
    Language barriers
    Poor attitude

17. Does your company do anything to help them?

    Respondents said they provide a range of services and resources including:
    Establishing a buddy system
    Informal help
    Employee Assistance Programs
    Providing instructors to teach English as a second language and other basic skills

Providing individual counseling and encouraging employees to prepare for eventual advancement
Providing opportunities for cross-training
Expecting direct supervisor accountability
Having a warning system and job performance review programs
Issuing verbal and written disciplinary notices
Putting employees in areas where they can watch people work and see it done so they can pick up the system
Providing company orientation programs
Providing as much room as possible for the employee to change
Referring out if they can't be helped onsite
Paying for detoxification programs.

19. What are the most common reasons to leave or be fired?

Poor attendance
Poor performance
- Chronic tardiness
- Poor attitude
- Personal and family problems

Personality conflict with supervisors
Inability to adapt to the culture and environment
Seeking full-time work if working part-time
Better pay
Fighting with other employees
Lack of work
Lack of child care
Sick children
Nonperformance—failure to meet expectations
Limited advancement opportunities
Relocation
Poor supervision
Inability to handle one's job
Undependability
Holding an unrealistic picture of the job
Lack of opportunities for mobility

20. What percentage stay at least six months?

Most responded that between 90 and 100 percent stay at least six months. Those businesses with high turnover rates were usually in the food industry/service industry.

21. How do you recognize and reward employees for performing well on the job?

A range of reward systems were mentioned including:

Incentive stock
Pay for good performance
Promotion to permanent positions
Cash awards
Recognition awards based on production level
Merit awards based on activity
Incentive cash award programs
Merit pay
Group and department employee recognitions
Gift certificates
Taking an Extra Step program of recognition
Recognition in the company newsletter
Plaques
Mention in their personnel file
Pats on the back
Employee of the Month Awards
Customer-nominated awards by department
Pay increases at 30, 60, and/or 90 days
Employee of the month received $100 at breakfast ceremony

22. What kinds of supervision do you provide entry-level employees?

As might be expected, employers reported a range of supervisory methods, including close supervision by supervisor and/or foreman to a more informal supervisory system. Some employers felt there were definite weaknesses in the supervisory method. In the food industry, employers mentioned that supervisors were often quite young and had been promoted in the system quickly, but had little skill or training at supervision. This was a concern of employers who felt that low-quality supervision was sometimes the reason entry-level workers were unsuccessful. One employer indicated that supervisors often write job descriptions that do not clearly specify the skills necessary to perform the job; thus employees may not understand what is expected of them, or they may be expected to perform tasks they are not qualified to do.

The most formal program of supervision was in the Apprenticeship program where apprentices get four years of training.

Supervision varied depending on the environment and need in a company or organization. For example production line workers may get close supervision, while clerical and office staff may receive less.

Department superintendents and foremen are often supervisors. Supervisors go over orientation checklists with new employees. Sometimes senior employees train new employees. Sometimes employees who do not speak English as a native language are assigned a supervisor who speaks the same native language. Peers are often used for training a new employee. One company had new employees evaluate their supervision and training. Evaluation questions included: Did you feel you had full attention? Did the supervisor establish a learning environment? Did the supervisor listen to you? What went wrong? What could we do better?

One agency tries to have the evaluator, engineering manager, and technician all involved in the assessment so they all hear what employees have to say.

23. Is there any training for supervisors?

Most supervisors had some kind of training. Training included interpersonal skills, technical skills for upgrading, quality improvement techniques, management seminars, and supervisory skills classes. One food service organization contracts with Marriott Corporation to do management training. Another company is piloting a team-building program called Executive Leadership Institute. And yet another uses a McGraw-Hill supervision series for managers.

24. What assistance in: a) basic skills, b) problem solving, c) teamwork, d) adaptability, and e) attendance?

Respondents reported the following assistance in the above-mentioned areas:

Classes in performance plans, how to hire, critical skills for supervision, setting expectations
Eleven-week training program for supervisors
Supervisor orientation and specific interview classes onsite or off-site
Working the Urban League on an Employment Advisory Council to work toward development of training for women and minorities to help prepare them for the labor market and provide training opportunities in basic skills
Employee Assistance Programs
Remediation process (writing programs, number skills, communication)
Organizational development classes
Use of quality circles in manufacturing training team dynamics
Use of enforcement, i.e., the "big stick" approach
Educational support for off-site programs (Onsite funds 100 percent if it is required and 75 percent if it will enhance skills. Instruction may take place at vocational schools, community colleges, or four-year institutions.)

Teamwork programs dealing with team building, quality circles, and employee committee involvement
Attend Duty Free University with sessions by the American Manufacturers Association on business, management skills for new supervisors, Japanese culture, language, philosophy and economy
Motivational seminars and coaching
Total Quality Management Process—trains everyone for 2-20 hours to teach how they can do better
Series of training programs on supervision policies, laws, leadership, managing conflict, performance management
Making a state training officer available to all departments
Facilities to do ongoing work with groups
Clear expectations in orientation handbook
Tutors
Opportunities to participate on team in union meeting negotiations
Training supervisors to work with tardy and absentee problems, conduct corrective action processes, provide verbal warnings, keep documentation, oversee probation, and give week layoffs without pay
Job specific coursework
Team exercise with work groups when there are problems
Regular performance evaluations include an analysis of skills needed to upgrade and a plan to get there
Employment skills class offered over a three-week period, including teamwork leadership skills in curriculum
Extra pay for more job knowledge
Workbooks available to all in resource center
Grant through Voc Tech to train 40 educationally disadvantaged people in pre-employment skills with a commitment to hire all
Contracts with Voc Tech to teach ESL on site to Asian employees
Contracts with private trainers
$50 bonus for 100 percent attendance
Corporate policy for managers to approach those who have been sick to let them know they were missed, allow those out on disability to return at light job with less pay until ready to return to full load, corrective system if needed

25. What types of training do you provide new employees?

Work attitudes and self-esteem
On-the-job training
Time to learn computer tutorials
Off-site formal training in word processing
Training by supervisor
Apprentices train for four years
Tellers work two weeks with a teller training covering balancing techniques

Sales skills training programs
Orientation
Career ladders are well mapped out
Rotation though departments
Health training classes
Communication
EEO individuals complete and follow an individualized development training plan, monthly evaluation
Classroom training based on individual needs
Safety classes, life-long learning
Brown bags: "How to communicate with your boss," time management, memo writing

26. By whom is the training provided?

Training is provided by coworkers, office managers, peers, the computer, in-house or contracted out with training groups, self-study texts, immediate supervisor, or team leader. Some departments/companies had a training staff, Human Resources Department, or an Employee Assistance Program. Other outside educational agencies used included: community colleges and vocational-technical colleges.

27. Are any of the following benefits available for entry-level workers?

In order of most often reported benefits provided by companies, responses were:

Employee Assistance Programs, medical plan
Special opportunities to advance in the company
College tuition reimbursement
Incentive programs
Peer/"buddy" help
Quality circles
Mentorships
Other education or training benefits
Profit sharing

28. Benefits reported as most attractive were (in order of priority):

Medical coverage for dependents
College tuition reimbursement
Other education or training
Profit sharing

29. Some employers include in their benefits package programs designed to assist employees in meeting work and family needs. In order, benefits most often reported were:

Medical coverage for dependents
Parental leave
Workshops—personal/family needs
Unpaid leave to care for dependents
Flexible work schedules
Option for part-time
Assistance with child care
Assistance with elderly care

30. Which of the above benefits seem particularly attractive to entry-level employees?

In order of highest number of responses by category, most attractive benefits are:

Medical coverage for dependents
Assistance with child care
Workshops on personal/family needs

31. What would you like to see schools do to better prepare people for entry-level employment?

Many employers emphatically expressed a concern for basic skills improvement. The definition of basic skills gets somewhat blurred when probing employers about the specific components. With the introduction of new technologies and growing dependence on computer-related production, basic skills is broadened to include computer literacy for many employers, especially those in banking and technological production.

Specifically, employers mentioned the following areas for improvement:

Teach students to have stronger basic skills, better work attitudes, a better understanding of what it's like to work, and what expectations employers hold.

Improve student preparation for the work environment, e.g., practice filling out applications, tours of job sites while students are in middle school, exposure to career education at a younger age.

Teach cooperative learning by placing students in groups and helping them to develop cooperative communication skills. Several employers expressed

concern that schools even punish students for cooperative learning, although these skills are critically needed for participation in the workforce. For example, students learn skills in peer evaluation when learning from this method.

Have lead technicians talk to kids, telling them the kinds of things they need to know

Teach the culture of business norms, expectations in the workplace, dress codes, etc. Teach students how to read road maps and how to use public transportation.

If workers are challenging the system (e.g., submitting complaints regarding hiring practices, etc.) they need to learn appropriate ways to conduct themselves in a challenging situation, including responsible assertive behavior, cooperative work habits, and what kinds of work are suited to oneself.

Teach students to let go of unrealistic expectations. Make sure they understand basic concepts, such as "if you don't work, you don't get paid." Teach general business practices.

Encourage accounting, computers, how to interview, role playing, filling out applications.

Get more involved with the business community. Provide real life experiences, more internships/real jobs.

There is an uneven quality of public education; thus the end product is variable. Students need a broader liberal arts background. They don't know how to think.

The attitude is often one of isolation. They come from a background with certain friends and don't want to leave the familiar. When they come for employment, they see it as just earning the money to meet their needs. Their only reason for being here is to get the money.

Teach people to be more flexible. Stress the values of attendance, work ethic, and proper dress. Provide immediate rewards for good performance. Help build students' self-esteem.

Schools teach students not to take initiative and to focus on a single task at a time. Work sites expect initiative and multiple focus. The schools are not in sync with the business community.

Don't pass students until they meet minimum requirements. Get creative in meeting the needs in education. Don't hold to a narrow conception of education. It's quality control; we have to do it in industry, why not in school?

Child Care

Several sites commented that much of the absenteeism problem is due to a lack of adequate child care for the employees. One employer said: "It takes both husband and wife working to make ends meet. Companies need to look seriously at day care. My problems with workers are problems finding day care and the need to stay home with the kids. Day care needs to be looked at critically if we want to have a workforce that can get here on time. It only makes common sense to create free day care resources for people so they can work. Day care needs to be quality care, not just a holding tank for kids. If we start young, they will be better educated for the time when they need to work."

One site provides onsite day care for employees with an atmosphere for children to learn about the environment, to mature through social activities, and to develop a positive self-image. Services are provided for both full-time and part-time employees. Children are encouraged to explore with their five senses and to learn about the world around them. The center is open 18 hours daily, from 5:45 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week. The company provides an infant program for babies between two and 12 months of age, a toddler program for children from 12 to 30 months (divided into four developmental groups), a preschool program for ages three to six (divided into three developmental groups); and a school-age program for children from 6 to 13 years.

The cost for onsite day care, however, may be too high for entry-level workers, unless it is subsidized.

Several sites indicated they were discussing onsite child care at this time. One site reported that the top level management wants to provide an onsite day care center for employees with 24-hour care. This particular site has shifts around the clock. The person interviewed said she felt having the site on the premises would help nonentry-level workers, but would not help entry-level employees because they get short breaks and a short lunch hour and also need to pass through a daily change of uniforms when beginning work. The delays in robing and disrobing for work preparation would render the nearby site unusable.

She suggested that several large companies build a 24-hour day care center together that would draw children from all contributing companies and be located centrally. A community effort such as this would have the potential for increasing the resources (financial and other) for a high-quality center.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Some of the common strategies used for training and retaining entry-level employees include:

Onsite training in basic skills development
Training in human relations, establishing goals and objectives, communication
Teaching work attitudes and self-esteem building
Reimbursement for classes when the subject matter relates to the job

Some of the more innovative strategies companies are now adopting include the following:

Several sites reported the importance of developing a company philosophy which guided the direction of the company and the programs it offered to employees. Philosophies included goals and strategies which are communicated to all employees through orientation, training, or mail and other communications. An example of a company goal might be to optimize the company's long-term value to the shareholders, employees, customers, and society. Strategies for meeting these goals included efficiency, competence, and focused growth. These strategies become the guiding principles by which programs are developed to provide training and direction to employees.

The need for developing a company philosophy was recognized as a strategy to improve the competitive nature of the company in relation to other world markets. Employers reported concern that foreign markets were becoming more competitive and that employees were not meeting minimum standards in such important areas as basic literacy and work ethic. To better provide direction and to communicate the seriousness of the competition, they developed a guiding philosophy which included the improved performance of all workers for the good of the company, recognizing, at the same time, that the company and its employees are one and the same and that the strength lies in putting each other's good ideas to work.

One company developed a philosophy supporting education and training of their employees. From that direction they were able to implement training programs designed to prepare workers to move up in the company. Classes were taught onsite either in person or by electronic dish from the local university. Participants were given university credit for satisfactory completion of the classes.

This particular site provided a Continuing Education Program with certification at four levels. Ten hours of Continuing Education Units are required to

certify to Level l within a department. Approved course topics were provided and participation was a joint decision between the supervisor and the employee. This program has been very successful for those who may be intimidated by a campus atmosphere.

Participants found that they could learn and get credit for the courses they took. It is a positive incentive for helping employees continue their education in a setting where they feel comfortable. It builds the self-confidence and self-esteem of employees. For the company, it helps keep employee skills current in a market that is quickly changing.

Classes were chosen for their relevance to company needs. For example, for this particular site, there is such a fast pace of change, employers felt they needed workers who could do basic algebra in order to work with the company statistical production evaluation programs. They found that many women signed up for these courses. Women with math anxiety were able to overcome many of the barriers because the instruction was paced according to the needs of the student. The student decided when to enroll in which level of classes. Classes were offered in decimals and fractions, basic math, and algebra. Math classes were scheduled early in the morning, usually at 6:00 a.m.

For those employees who did not speak English as a native language many companies were providing either onsite or off-site language instruction. One company donated one hour of paid time and asked the employee to donate one hour of free time. The classes were scheduled between major work shifts, usually in the evening as the workers were coming off their shift. When classes were offered using volunteer teachers, attendance was poor and students didn't seem committed. The company decided to hire an ESL teacher to provide instruction on site. Within a short time they found the class to be extremely successful. When the company demonstrated its support and commitment to helping their employees, the employees performed well.

Another example of an innovative strategy is to have the employees evaluate the supervisor who trains them. This allows the employee an opportunity to express concerns about what didn't work well and also to identify positive training strategies that can be duplicated in other training programs.

Mentoring was being used at one site. A manager/mentor relationship is established with new employees to help with networking and norms of the company, to provide activities to understand the "why" behind the "how" of policies and procedures, to improve on a faster learning curve, to provide support among new hires, to increase interaction with managers, and to im-

prove employee commitment to the organization. A series of social activities which include both mentor and employee are established at specific intervals during the first six months of employment. Employees begin with an orientation, are assigned a mentor, and within the first week, mentor and employee have dinner together. The organization has a new employee dinner, a barbecue, and several other social occasions planned to help mentor and employee establish a solid working relationship. Mentors can then help employees learn the system and culture of the organization.

This same site offers courses on employee integration and communication as part of Phase II of the Orientation. Four sessions for a total of 14 hours give new employees an overview/history of the company and an overview of each functional area. The functional staff and general manager share this information and have lunch with the new employees.

All employees receive an orientation and attend four sessions (14 hours) on working at the company, which include understanding the company philosophy and work environment. The focus is on relating performance, pay and development to the philosophy of the work environment.

All new hires at this same company receive training in satisfying the customers, which emphasizes skills for creating good relations with internal/external customers.

Interpersonal communication is provided at one site, which includes basic communication skills, focusing on active listening, "I-messages," feedback and questioning skills. A total of eight hours of training is provided.
For supervisory training one site used a Creative\People Management class of 16 hours to train supervisors. An external class uses a computerized tool called the social style profile to delineate an individual's style of interpersonal interaction as seen by others. It also measures versatility in being able to interact with different social styles. The employee's department pays for the course.

At one site supervisory training includes management performance evaluation and pay, Affirmative Action and interviewing/selection, company finance, health and safety management, benefits and personnel guidelines. A heavy emphasis on the company philosophy was introduced into the training curriculum.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is an independent, nonprofit research and development institution established in 1966 to assist education, government, community agencies, business and labor in improving quality and equality in educational programs and processes by:

- Developing and disseminating effective educational products and procedures
- Conducting research on educational needs and problems
- Providing technical assistance in educational problem solving
- Evaluating effectiveness of educational programs and projects
- Providing training in educational planning, management, evaluation and instruction
- Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes including networking among educational agencies, institutions and individuals in the region

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